

MULTIMEDIA



UNIVERSITY

STUDENT ID NO

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MULTIMEDIA UNIVERSITY

FINAL EXAMINATION

TRIMESTER 2, 2017/2018

LCW1027 - CREATIVE WRITING

(All sections)

05 MARCH 2018

9-00 – 11.00 am

(2 Hours)

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**INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENT**

1. This question paper consists of **TWO** pages with **TWO** sections only.
2. Answer **ALL** questions in **SECTION A** and **SECTION B**.
3. Write all your answers in the *Answer Booklet* provided.

**SECTION A: PERSONAL RESPONSE (30 MARKS)**

**Instructions:** Answer **all** questions.

Write a personal response in about 500 – 600 words on the Introduction to “*Lipstick Jihad, A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran*” by Azadeh Moaveni.

**Introduction**

I was born in Palo Alto, California, into the lap of an Iranian diaspora community awash in nostalgia and longing for an Iran many thousands of miles away. As a girl, raised on the distorting myths of exile, I imagined myself a Persian princess, estranged from my homeland – a place of light, poetry, and nightingales – by a dark, evil force called the Revolution. I borrowed the plot from Star Wars, convinced it told Iran’s story. Ayatollah Khomeini was Darth Vader. Tromping about suburban California, I lived out this fantasy. There must be some supernatural explanation, I reasoned, for the space landing of thousands of Tehranis to a world of vegan smoothies and Volvos, chakras, and Tupak.

Growing up, I had no doubt that I was Persian. Persian like a fluffy cat, a silky carpet – a vaguely Oriental notion belonging to history, untraceable on a map. It was the term we insisted on using at the time, embarrassed by any association with Iran, the modern country, the hostage-taking Death Star. Living a myth, a fantasy, made it easier to be Iranian in America.

As life took its course, as I grew up and went to college, discovered myself, and charted a career, my Iranian sense of self remained intact. But when I moved to Tehran in 2000 – pleased with my pluckiness, and eager to prove myself as a young journalist – it, along with the fantasies, dissolved. Iran, as it turned out, was not the Death Star, but a country where people voted, picked their noses, and ate French fries. Being a Persian girl in California, it turned out, was like, a totally different thing than being a young Iranian woman in the Islamic Republic of Iran. In hindsight, these two points seem startlingly obvious, but no one ever pointed them out, probably because if you need them pointed out, you clearly have problems. So, I leaned for myself, as I endured a second, equally fraught coming of age – this time as a Californian in Iran. I never intended my Iranian odyssey as a search for self, but a very different me emerged at its end. I went looking for a modern Iran, especially the generation of the revolution, the lost generation as it is sometimes called. The generation I would have belonged to, had I not grown up outside.

For two years, I worked as a journalist for Time Magazine, reporting on the twists and turns of Iranian society, through high politics and ordinary life. Since 1998, the revolutionary regime’s experiments with political reforms – a brief flirtation with democracy – had captured the world’s attention. The cultural rebellion of Iranian youth against the rigid, traditionalist system fizzed with unknown potential. As a journalist, I arrived during these times with urgent questions. Was Iran really becoming more democratic? What did young people want, exactly? Did demographics (two-thirds of the 70 million population is under thirty) make change inevitable? Would there be another revolution, or did Iranians prefer this regime to secularize? Were Iranians really pro-American, or just anti-clerical? Often there was more than one answer, maddeningly contradictory, equally correct.

**Continued . . .**

I came to see Iranian society as culturally confused, politically dead-locked, and emotionally anguished. While the vast majority of Iranians despised the clerics, and dreamed of a secular government, no easy path to that destination presented itself. In the meanwhile, revolutionary ideology was drawing its last, gasping breaths. Its imminent death was everywhere on display. You saw it when Basiji kids, the regime's thug-fundamentalist militia, stopped a car for playing banned music, confiscated the tapes, and then popped them into their own car stereo. You saw it when the children of senior clerics showed up at parties and on the ski slopes, dressed in Western clothes and alienated from their parents' radical legacy. It was there outside the courthouse on Vozara Street, where young people laughed and joked as they awaited their trials and lashings, before brushing them off and going on to the next party.

Iran's young generation - the generation born just before the revolution or along with - is transforming Iran from below. From the religious student activist to the ecstasy-trippers, from the bloggers to the bed-hopping college students, they will decide Iran's future. I decided I wanted to live like them, as they did, their "as if" lifestyle. They chose to act 'as if' it was permitted to hold hands on the street, blast music at parties, speak your mind, challenge authority, take your drug of choice, grow your hair long, wear too much lipstick. This generation taught me how to unlock the mystery of Iran - how nothing perceptibly alters, but everything changes - not by reading the newspapers but by living an approximation of a young Iranian's life. That is why I cannot write about them without writing about myself. That is why this is both their story and my own.

Today, in a quiet room in a country not far from Iran in space, I am finally unpacking the boxes from those two years in Tehran. As I sort through the clothes, peeling veil from veil, it is like tracing the rings of a tree trunk to tell its evolution. The outer layers are a wash of color, dashing tones of turquoise and frothy pink, in delicate chiffons and translucent silks. They are colors that are found in life - the color of pomegranates and pistachio, the sky and bright spring leaves - in fabrics that breathe. Underneath, as I dig down, there are dark, matte veils, long, formless robes in funeral tones of slate and black. That is what we wore, back in 1998. Along the way, the laws never changed. Parliament never officially pardoned color, sanctioned the exposure of toes and waistlines. Young women did it themselves, en masse, as a slow, deliberate, widespread act of defiance. A jihad, in the classical sense of the word: a struggle.

*Source: Moaveni, A. (2005). Lipstick Jihad : A Memoir of growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran. US: Public Affairs.*

## **SECTION B: Poetry writing (20 marks)**

**Instructions:** Answer one question.

Write **either** a prose poem, a panton or a ghazel on the *theme of displacement*. Remember to pay attention to the form of the poem.

**Refer to the requirements below:**

- If you write a prose poem, write between 100 - 150 words.
- If a Panton, write five stanzas of four equal lines.
- If you choose a ghazel, write fifteen long line couplets.

**End of paper**